

REMARKS

In the Office Action of April 9, 2004, the Examiner rejected claims 1-6 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,059,612 to Aoyama et al.

Applicants have cancelled claim 5, amended claims 1, 3, 4, and 6, and have added new claims 7-21 to further claim aspects of Applicants' invention. Accordingly, claims 1-4 and 6-21 are pending in this Application. No new matter has been added by this Reply.

Applicants respectfully traverse the 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) rejection of claims 1-6 for at least the reason that Aoyama et al. fails to disclose every claim element. For example, independent claim 1 discloses a combination of elements including a locking member having an end fixed to a wall of a connector housing between a terminal receiving side and an engaging side of the connector housing, a holder configured for insertion into the engaging side of the connector housing, and a locking mechanism configured to lock the wall of the connector housing to the holder to resist deflection of the wall during flexure of the locking member. Further, independent claim 6 discloses a plurality of dovetail joints for preventing an outer peripheral wall of a connector housing from flexing.

In the Office Action, the Examiner maintained that Aoyama et al. discloses a connector housing (1), a locking member (12), a holder (2), and a locking mechanism (21, 22) that includes a dovetail joint. However, Aoyama et al. does not disclose any connector including a locking member having an end fixed to a wall of a connector housing and a locking mechanism configured to lock the wall to a holder to resist deflection of the wall, as recited in independent claim 1.

Further, Aoyama et al. does not disclose any connector having a plurality of dovetail joints for preventing an outer peripheral wall of a connector housing from flexing, as recited in independent claim 6. In contrast, Aoyama et al. only discloses a single dovetail joint and does not even suggest preventing a wall from flexing.

For at least these reasons, the rejection under section 102(b) of independent claims 1 and 6 is improper and should be withdrawn. In addition, claims 2, 3, and 4, which ultimately depend from independent claim 1, are allowable for at least the same reasons as cited above. Each of these dependent claims also recites unique combinations that are neither taught nor suggested by the cited art.

Applicants submit that new claims 7-19 are neither anticipated nor rendered obvious by the prior art of record. New claims 7-19 ultimately depend from one of independent claims 1 and 6, and are in condition for allowance for at least the same reasons as independent claims 1 and 6. In addition, each of these dependent claims recites unique combinations that are neither taught nor suggested by the cited art, and therefore, like independent claims 1 and 6, each is in condition for allowance.

Applicants also submit that new claims 19-21 are neither anticipated nor rendered obvious by the prior art. In particular, claim 19 recites a combination of steps including, among other things, slidably inserting a holder into a connector housing and locking a wall of the connector housing to the holder via at least one dovetail joint to reduce movement of the wall during assembly of the connector housing with a mating member. Applicants submit that new claims 20 and 21 are allowable over the prior art of record and, accordingly, Applicants request that new claims 20 and 21 be allowed.

The Office Action contains characterizations of the claims and the related art with which Applicants do not necessarily agree. Unless expressly noted otherwise, Applicants decline to subscribe to any statement or characterization of the Office Action.

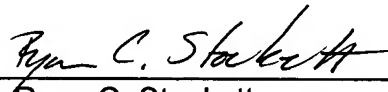
In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicants respectfully request the reconsideration and reexamination of this application and the timely allowance of the pending claims.

Please grant any extensions of time required to enter this response and charge any additional required fees to our deposit account no. 06-0916.

Respectfully submitted,

FINNEGAN, HENDERSON, FARABOW,
GARRETT & DUNNER, L.L.P.

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By: 
Ryan C. Stockett
Reg. No. 53,642